لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

إن الدين عند الله الإسلام

THE REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

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Wafa 1353—July 1974

EDITOR

M. G. AHMAD

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam

The Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was born in 1835 at Qadian, a village in India. In the eighties of the 19th century, he was called to the office of World Reformer to combat the current of religious philosophies and to explode the Christian theory of redemption based on the fiction of Christ's death on the Cross and to tell the Christians and Muslims to call off their hope for a second visit from Christ as he had been gathered to his forefathers and barred like all mortals from coming back to the world, and that he had come instead as the Promised Messiah.

The Promised Messiah initiated the Ahmadiyya Movement to revive faith in God, challenging rival churches to a spiritual contest to seek Divine sanction for the religion He favoured, through prayer and appeal to Him for guidance and arbitration in the matter, by means of His signs, to re-establish the glory of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, to expound and disseminate spiritual beauties and moral excellences of the teachings of the Holy Quran, to wean men from war-like tendencies and to educate world opinion in favour of renunciation of war as a means of settling disputes, to infuse hope, faith and courage in the drooping hearts of Muslims and all the depressed races and nations of the world, to warn the exploiters, slave-drivers, and pedlars in sin against the evil consequences of their evil ways, to collect under one banner all the true followers of Islam and lovers of peace and to inculcate among them the spirit of tolerance, good will and selfless fellow-service and a feeling of true brotherhood.

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The Promised Messiah passed away in 1908 and was succeeded by his foremost votary and closest companion, Hazrat Hafiz Haji Hakim Maulvi Noor ud-Din as Khalifa-tul Masih I. After his death in 1914, the Promised Son of the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Haji Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, was chosen as Khalifa-tul Masih II. During his 52-year long leadership, the Khalifa-tul Masih II organized a world-girdling chain of mosques and missions. On his death on November 8, 1965, the electoral college named, with one accord, Sahibzada Hafiz Mirza Nasir Ahmad, Promised Messiah's grandson, Khalifa-tul Masih III.

For further information about the Movement, its activities, aims, objectives and literature, enquires may be addressed to the nearest Ahmadiyya Mission or direct to

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It is open to all for discussing problems vital to the religious and spiritual welfare of man, but it does not give any assurance to publish all articles received by the Editor, nor does it accept responsibility for views expressed by contributors.

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CONTENTS

1. Our Stand ... 217

2. Message of the Imam ... 231

3. The Status of Women in Islam ... 233

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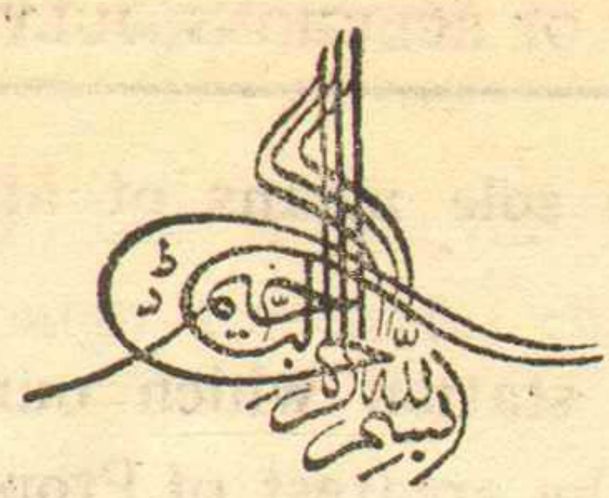

نحمدہ ونصلی علی رسولہ الکریم

The Review of Religions

RABWAH, WEST PAKISTAN

Vol. LXIX WAFA, 1353—JULY, 1974 No. 7

OUR STAND

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community has emphatically affirmed his faith in Khatme Nubuwwat. He has pronounced with great insistance that the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the chosen one (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) is indeed KHATAMUN NABIYYEEN.

(a) "I solemnly believe that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is Khatamul Ambiya. One who does not believe in his Khatme Nubuwwat is faithless and outside the pale of Islam."[1]

(b) "The gist of my faith is لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله. There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet. Our belief to which we are committed in this life and to which we will stick by the Grace and Mercy of Allah to the last moment of our sojourn on this earth is that our Chief and Master, the Holy Prophet, on whom be peace and blessings of Allah, is the Khatamun Nabiyyeen and Khairul Mursaleen—the best of Prophets. At his hands was the Law of Shariah perfected. This perfect blessing is today the only guide to the right

1. Taqreer Wajibul I'lan October 23, 1891.

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path and the sole means of attaining union with God Almighty."[2]

(c) "The exalted station which our Lord and Master, the Chief of all, the greatest of Prophets, Hazrat Khatamun-Nabiyyeen, on whom be peace and blessings of Allah, occupies has ended in his person which embodies all that is perfect and which is otherwise beyond human attainment."[3]

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(d) "What Allah requires us to believe is only this that He is One and Muhammad, peace and blessings of God be on him—is His Prophet and that he is Khatamul Ambiya and is superior to all."[4]

(e) "I say it in all sincerity that we can make peace with poisonous snakes and wild wolves, but we cannot come to terms with those who are guilty of foul attacks on our beloved Prophet who is dearer to us than our lives and our parents."[5]

(f) "Had these people slaughtered our children in front of our eyes and hacked our dear and near ones to pieces and caused us to die in humiliation and shame and usurped all our worldly goods, God is our witness that it would not have pained us so much as it has, at the abuses and insults hurled against our Holy Prophet—on whom be peace and blessings of Allah."[6]

QUESTIONS

1. The question is asked that after this solemn and unequivocal declaration what kind of prophet does the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement claim to be?

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2. Izala-i-Auham page 137, 1891.
3. Taudih-i-Maram page 23, published 1891.
4. Kishti-i-Nuh page 15, published 1902.
5. Paigham-i-Sulh page 30, published in 1908.
6. Aina-i-Kamalat-i-Islam, page 52 published in 1893.

2. And has this kind of prophethood ever been mentioned in the writings of the Muslim divines of the past, in the context of the Promised Reformer who was to be raised from among the Muslims?
3. If the early writings of the Muslim Scholars positively allow the possibility of this kind of prophethood, then why do the contemporary Ulama on the basis of his claim to this kind of prophethood, declare the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement to be an apostate?

ANSWER

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Part I

Let us remember that the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement did not lay claim to the type of prophethood in which the public and the Ulama believe. They believe that a prophet is not the follower of an earlier prophet, that he does not attain prophethood by obeying and following another prophet but that he is a prophet on his own and is never a follower of any other prophet.

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement emphatically refuted this belief. He says: "The institution of prophethood has ended except through and in the Holy Prophet Muhammad. No Law-bearing prophet can come any more. A prophet without bringing new Law can come but he must first be an Ummati i.e., a follower of the Holy Prophet."[7]

In what relation then does the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement stand to his Lord and Master and the Lord and Master of us all, the Holy Prophet Muhammad—peace be upon him? The founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement categorically declares that his status in relation to the Holy Prophet is one of a humble and lowly servant and slave to his Master and Lord.

He says:

"This humble one too has the honour to be amongst the

7. Tajalliat-i-Ilahia page 20, written in 1906.

humblest of the servants of that August Prophet who is the Chief of the Prophets and the king of Apostles."[8]

He has repeatedly affirmed that he is not a Law-bearing prophet. He is a follower of the Holy Quran. True, he is the Promised Mahdi and Messiah. But he is not an independent prophet. He is a humble servant of the Holy Prophet. Whatever he has gained, he has gained because of him. He is his follower and Ummati, and has been raised in fulfilment of his promises and prophecies.

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He further says :

"After the Holy Prophet it is no more permissible to apply the term 'Prophet to any one until and unless he is first an Ummati and follower of the Holy Prophet. It means that every favour of which he is the recipient has been granted to him only because he has had the honour to follow the Holy Prophet. He has received no divine favour independently."[9]

"No eminence and excellence, no honour, no communion with God can possibly be attained except through complete obedience to the Holy Prophet. Whatever we receive is because of him and of him."[10]

"All the windows of prophethood are shut except that of total surrender to the Holy Prophet and of complete annihilation in him."[11]

"I partake of this blessing so completely not because of any personal merit but because of Allah's grace. It is a blessing which was bestowed upon Prophets, Messengers and Chosen ones of Allah even before me. It would not have been possible for me to attain it had I not followed my Chief and Master, the pride of Prophets and the best of them all, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace

8. Barahin-i-Ahmadiyya page 572, published 1884.
9. Tajalliat-i-Ilahia page 9, written in 1906.
10. Izala-i-Auham page 138, published 1891
11. Aik Ghalati Ka Izala page 3, published 1901.

and blessings of God be upon him). Whatever I have received is because of my submission to him, I am fully and perfectly convinced that no one can reach God and have His true knowledge except by following the Holy Prophet."[12]

"God Who knew his heart's secret exalted him over all the prophets, those who preceded him and those who were to follow him. Allah fulfilled all his desires in his life time. He indeed is the fountain-head of all that is good. One, who lays claim to any excellence without acknowledging one's debt and obligation to him, is not of man but of Satan, for he alone has been given the key to all excellence. And he indeed has been granted the treasures of divine knowledge. He, who does not receive through him will never receive from any one. Apart from him, I amount to nothing ; nothing at all. It will be the height of ungratefulness on our part, if we did not acknowledge that it was through the Holy Prophet alone that we came to have a true understanding of the Unity of the One and only God. Verily, it was through him and the light of his excellence that we came to realise a living God."[13]

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"I cannot help repeating it and declaring it aloud that true love of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet and complete surrender to him enables a man to work miracles, and for such a person doors to hidden knowledge are opened. No follower of any other religion can compare with him in the matter of spiritual blessings. I happen to have first hand knowledge of this phenomenon. I bear witness that except Islam all religions are defunct ; their gods are dead and their followers are nothing but carrion. It is absolutely impossible, I repeat impossible to have a living relationship with God unless

12. Haqiqatul Wahi page 62 published 1907.
13. Haqiqatul Wahi, page 116, published 1907.

one accepts Islam."[14]

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement has repeatedly pointed ou that he has no independent status and is not an independent prophet. He is prophet only in the sense that he has brought no new Law and is charged with the responsibility of re-establishing and re-enforcing the perfect Law revealed to the Holy Prophet.

He also declared that since he was a humble Servant of the Holy Prophet, he had been blessed with two powerful weapons for the implementation of this grand design. These weapons were rational and objective arguments on the one hand and heavenly signs on the other and were indeed a gift of God and had been granted in support of His chosen religion.

The world has at long last come to acknowledge that these arguments, proofs and heavenly signs are irrefutable and incontrovertible. Mr. Cecil Northcott discussing the March of Islam in West Africa, says:

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"Sierra Leone is the chosen ground in West Africa for the Ahmadiyya Muslims who, strongly directed from Pakistan, are entrenching themselves in this small State.

Medical Mission and Schools:

"The Ahmadiyya Movement claims to interpret Islam in modern terms and to answer the challenge of Christianity. It is now proposing to set up a medical mission in Sierra Leone, and its schools are increasing in number. In West Africa, Islam, according to the most recent authoritative survey, progresses ten times more rapidly than Christianity."[15]

A distinguished member of the Christian Mission in Nigeria (Catholic Herald, Nigeria 19.8.1955) said:

"They (Muslims) were the most backward community some

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14. Zamima Pamphlet Anjam-i-Atham page 61-62, published 1897.
15. The Pakistan Times, Lahore, 11th December, 1960.

thirty years ago, but since the Ahmadis started their progressive campaign wonderful changes have been wrought among them."

In the preface to Maulvi Ashraf Ali Thanwi's translation of the Holy Quran the same phenomenon is discussed in the following terms:

"During this period Bishop Lefroy left Europe with a large contingent of Christian Missionaries and vowed that before long he would convert the whole of the Indian sub-Continent to Christianity. With large financial assistance and promises of continued monetary help he arrived in India and created a great stir—He launched his attack with the argument that Jesus was alive in Heaven with his mortal frame while the other prophets were buried in earth. The argument appeared to be eminently effective. It was at this time that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad took up the cudgels for Islam and told Bishop Lefroy and his companions that Jesus Christ had died and was buried like other mortals. "The Messiah who was to come is none other than I", declared he, "If you are honest you should accept me." By this stratagem he harrassed Bishop Lefroy so much that it became impossible for him to extricate himself from this predicament. In this way he routed the Christian missionaries all the way from India to Europe."[16]

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement further stated that: Since he had been raised to establish the truth of Islam and of Hazrat Khatamul Ambiya and to clinch the arguments against all the false religions, God revealed to him the future events and bestowed upon him heavenly signs, disclosed to him

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16. Preface p. 30 compiled and published by Maulvi Nur Muhammad Qadri Naqshbandi, Chishti, proprietor, Asahhul Matabay and Karkhanai Tijarat Kutub, Aram Bagh, Karachi.

the news of the great Unknown. This state is termed as prophethood in the Arabic language. He said he was a prophet only in this sense. He adds :

> "The word NABI is common to Arabic and Hebrew. In Hebrew it is pronounced as NAABI which is a derivative from NABA signifying the divine gift of prophecy. It is not essential for a prophet to be Law-bearing. This state is a divine favour by which future events are revealed."[17]

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A day before his death he declared thus :

> "The charge levelled against me is that the kind of prophethood I claim takes me away from Islam. In other words, the charge is that I believe myself to be an independent prophet, a prophet who need not follow the Holy Quran, and that my Kalima is different and Qibla separate. I am also supposed to have abrogated the Law and severed the ties of allegiance to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The charge is absolutely false. Any claim to this kind of prophethood is apostacy, pure and simple. Not only now but since the very beginning I have throughout been stating in my books that I lay no claim to such prophethood. This is entirely a baseless charge and a calumny against me. The true position is merely this. When I call myself a prophet, I only mean that Allah speaks to me ; that He speaks to me very frequently, and has dialogue with me, and acknowledges my submissions, and reveals to me things unknown, and discloses secrets to me which belong to the future and which He would disclose to no one who is not dear and near to Him. Indeed, He has designated me as prophet merely on this account."[18]

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17. Aik Ghalati Ka Izala p. 8, published 1901.
18. Akhbar-i-Am, Lahore, May 26, 1908, p. 7 also Tabligh-i-Risalat, Vol. X., pp. 132 - 134.

Part II

The type of prophethood claimed by the Founder of Ahmadiyya Movement is also mentioned in the writings of the early divines. The Holy Prophet himself designated the Promised one as the prophet of God at least four times. This is reported through Nawas bin Samaan, in Sahih Muslim, one of the most authentic collections of traditions.[19]

The Mother of the faithful, Hazrat Aisha says :

> "Do say that he is Khatamun Nabiyyeen but do not say that there would be no prophet after him."[20]

Hazrat Imam Mohammad Tahir Gujrati (b. 914 A.H. / 1509 A.D. d. 986 A.H. / 1578 A.D.) commenting on the foregoing saying of Hazrat Aisha, said :

هذا ايضاً لا ينافى حديث لا نبى بعدى لانه اراد لا نبى ينسخ شرعه .

> *Translation :* Her words do not conflict with the Hadith. Because what the Holy Prophet meant was that there would be no such prophet as would abrogate the Shariat.[21]

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The renowned Spanish scholar, mystic and spiritual leader, Hazrat Mohiuddin Ibn Arabi (b. 560 A.H./1165 A.D. d. 638 A.H./ 1240 A.D.) says :

فالنبوة سارية الى يوم القيامة فى الخلق و ان كان التشريع قد انقطع - فالتشريع جزء من اجزاء النبوة.

> *Translation :* This kind of Prophethood will stay as long as man lasts on the surface of this earth, although the

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19. Muslim, Vol. II, pp. 515-516, printed in Egypt.
20. Tafsir Durr-i-Manthur, Vol. V., p. 204., compiled by Sheikh Allama Jalalud Din Sayoti (b. 849 A.H., 1445 A.D. d. 911 A.H. 1505 A.D.)
21. Takmilah Majmaul Bihar, p. 85.

practice of sending down new Law had been discontinued. Truly the bringing of law is one of the kinds of prophethood.[22]

The renowned scholar of Hadith, famous Imam of Ahle Sunnat, Hazrat Imam Ali Alqari (d. 1014 A.H./1606 A.D.) says :

مع هذا لو عاش ابراهيم و صار نبيا و كذا لو صار عمر نبياً

لكانا من اتباعه عليه السلام كعيسى و الخضر و الياس عليهم السلام

فلا يناقض قوله خاتم النبيين اذ المعنى انه لا ياتى نبى بعده

ينسخ ملته ولم يكن من امته .

Translation : If Ibraheem (son of the Holy Prophet) had lived, and was appointed a prophet, and if Hazrat Umar too had been raised to prophethood then both of them would have been subordinate to the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) like Jesus Christ, Khidhr and Elias. The Hadith

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لو عاش لكان صديقاً نبياً .

is not opposed to the divine word خاتم النبيين because Khatamun Nabiyyeen means that no prophet can come after the Holy Prophet, who would abrogate his Law and would not be his Ummati—follower.[23]

The following passage occurs in the famous work on Shia doctrine Biharul Anwar.

يقول يا معشر الخلائق الا و من اراد ان ينظر الى ابراهيم و اسماعيل فها انا ذا ابراهيم و اسماعيل الا و من اراد ان ينظر الى موسى و يوشع فها انا ذا موسى و يوشع الا و من اراد ان ينظر الى عيسى و شمعون فها انا ذا عيسى و شمعون الا و من اراد ان ينظر الى محمد و اميرالمؤمنين صلوات الله

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22. Futuhati Makkiah, Vol. II, Chap. 73, p. 100.
23. Mauzuati Kabir p. 69.

علیه فها انا ذا محمد صلی الله علیه و آله و امیر المؤمنین .

Translation : Imam Mahdi would say 'O ye people ! one who wishes to see Abraham and Ismail should see me because I am Abraham and Ismail. Those who wish to see Moses and Joshua, then I am Moses and Joshua. Those who wish to see Jesus and Simon should behold that I indeed am Jesus and Simon. Those who wish to see Mohammad and the Commander of the faithful (blessings be on him) should see me for I verily am Mohammad (peace be on him) and Commander of the Faithful."[24]

Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanutvee (b. 1248 A.H./1833 A. D. d. 1297 A.H./1880 A.D.), Founder of Darul Uloom, Deoband and successor to Hazrat Shah Abdul Aziz writes:

"Supposing a prophet is raised after the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) it will not affect in the slightest degree Khatamiyyat of the Holy Prophet."[25]

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Part III

The foregoing extracts would show that the earlier Divines believed that a non-Law-bearing prophet who must also be a follower of the Holy Prophet and his Ummati could be raised from amongst the Muslims. His coming in no way conflicts with his Khatme Nubuwwat (ختم نبوت). It is therefore more than clear that the claim to be the Mahdi or the Messiah or the Ummati prophet is not in itself a claim in consequence of which one should be considered a disbeliever in Khatm-i-Nubuwwat of the Holy Prophet and outside the pale of Islam.

The question arises as to why should the contemporary Ulama declare the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement to be an apostate ?

In answer we can only add that there is nothing unexpected about it. The saints of the Ummat forewarned about this long

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24. Biharul Anwar, Vol. XIII, p. 202.
25. Tahzirunnas, Khairkhwah Sarkar Press, Saharanpur. p. 25.

ago. Extracts from some of the prophecies are quoted below:

The renowned mystic and Commentator of the Holy Quran who is famous throughout the world of Islam, Hazrat Sheikh Mohiuddin Ibn Arabi says:

و اذا خرج هذا الامام المهدى فليس له عدو مبين الا الفقهاء
خاصة فانه لا تبقى لهم رياسة و لا تميز عن العامة .

Translation: "When the Imam Mahdi appears, no one will oppose him more than the so-called jurists and the mullas for they would be afraid of losing their standing and their hold over the masses.[26]

Hazrat Sheikh Ahmad Sarhandi (b. 971 A.H./1564 A.D. d. 1034 A.H./1624 A.D.), the Mujaddid of the 11th century says:

نزدیک است که علمائے ظواهر مجتهدات او را علی نبینا و علیه
الصلوة و السلام از کمال دقت و غموض مأخذ انکار نمایند و مخالف
کتاب و سنت دانند .

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Translation: The Ulama who over-emphasize the form of religion as against its content will refuse to accept his re-interpretations because of their extreme subtlety and depth and denounce them as being against the Holy Quran and the practice of the Holy Prophet.[27]

Nawab Siddique Hasan Khan (b. 1248 A.H. / 1835 A.H. d. 1307 A.H./1889 A.H.), writes:

چون مهدی علیه السلام مقاتله بر احیائے سنت و اماتت بدعت فرماید
علمائے وقت که خوگر تقلید فقها و اقتدائے مشائخ و آباء خود
باشند - گویند این مرد خانه بر انداز دین و ملت ماست و بمخالفت
برخیزند بحسب عادت خود حکم بتکفیر و تذلیل وے کنند .

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26. Futuhati Makkiah. Vol. III, Chap. 366, p. 374.
27. Maktubati Imam Rabbani, Vol. II, Maktub 55, p. 107.

Translation : When the Mahdi would be engaged in the revival of the practice of the Holy Prophet and combat all innovations, the contemporary Ulama who would be blind followers of Jurists and given to imitate their Chiefs and forefathers would declare : "This man is against our established religion and traditions." They would rise unanimously against him and in keeping with their age-old habit denounce him as an apostate and a transgressor.[28]

It is worth noting that as far as the verdict of apostacy is concerned not a single sect has escaped from this stigma. As pointed out in the Muneer Enquiry Report, if one were to go by the verdicts of apostacy not a single Pakistani could be called a Muslim. This is the result of disregarding the clear injunction of the Holy Prophet which runs as follows :

من صلى صلوتنا و استقبل قبلتنا و أكل ذبيحتنا فذالك المسلم الذى له ذمة الله و ذمة رسوله فلا تخفروا الله فى ذمته .

Translation : One who offers his prayers as we do, faces towards our Qibla, eats what has been slaughtered by us is a Muslim. He is under the protection of Allah and his Prophet. Hence do not put Allah to humiliation concerning His covenant.

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To Sum Up

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement said that he was nothing more than an Ummati Prophet viz. a prophet who is a follower of the Holy Prophet. Nothing was his own. All that he had in fact belonged to his Master and Lord, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him) who verily is the Khatamul Ambiya. In the solar system, the moon

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28. HujajulKaramah, p. 363, printed 1291 A.H.
29. Bukhari Kitbus Salat, Babo Fazli Istiqbal il Qiblata, Vol. I. p. 56, printed in Egypt.

is totally dependent on the sun for light. Without the light of the sun the moon loses its meaningful existence. Similarly in the spiritual universe the Holy Prophet is like the sun and one who truly reflects his light and illumines the Fourteenth Century cannot claim to possess an independent light. Instead every ray of light reflected by him is the light of the Holy Prophet who indeed is its real fountain-head. Without him it will be all dark.

It is to bring out this relationship to the Holy Prophet that the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community cries out:

All that we have is his;
O, God be my witness.
He indeed is the beloved
And his is the light
Which blazed the path
To the Truth.
I long for that light.
To him alone I belong.
He is all
And I am nothing
And there the matter ends.

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Important Message of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih III

This is the English version of the Message of our Beloved Khalifatul-Masih which has already appeared in the Community's Organ, The Daily Alfazl, of 8th and 9th June 1974.

(I) By Allah's Grace and Mercy
He Alone is the Helper

My loved ones-in-Allah and My dearer than life friends,

May thousands of divine blessings descend on you ever and always. May Allah be your protector and helper and may He strengthen you in your faith and devotion, invest you with steadfastness at every step and under all circumstances ; and succour you with the spirit of holiness. Amen.

The turbulent times through which Jamaat Ahmadiyya is passing today have been causing extreme anxiety to Ahmadis all over the world. Each moment that passes is replete with agonies and tears. All pain, worry and anxiety they experience is reflected manifold in every beat of my heart. Each moment, my condition is best summed up by the Quranic verse :

'Verily, I submit my grief and anguish to Allah'.

Friends ask me what they should do under the circumstances. My answer is that they should follow the Quranic injunction : "Seek help through fortitude and prayer", Seek strength and patience from your Lord, Allah, through prayer and supplication. Be patient and pray ; be patient and pray. Let the place where you prostrate be soaked with your tears. Let every moment be spent in prayer. For, this alone is your mark of distinction. And in this alone lies your salvation here and in the hereafter. When did you cry for His succour and He did

not come to your rescue? He is more loyal than the loyal, more forgiving than the forgiving and more loving than those who love. The agonised cries of a child do not move the mother as much as the humble supplication and tears of His humble servants draw His mercy. Therefore, spend your nights crying and your days in prayers. Become living embodiments of prayer and wait for divine help.

We place complete and total reliance in the One and only Allah. We walk under the shadow of His grace. He shall never forsake us.

I, who love you most and am ever restless for you and pray for you with all my heart, remain a humble servant of Allah,

Mirza Nasir Ahmad
Khalifatul Masih III

7 Ihsan 1353, 7 June, 1974.
(Al-Fazl 8. 6. 1974)

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(II) With the grace and mercy of Allah He alone is the Helper

Dear Brethren,

Assalamo Alaikum.

You must have already read my message published in yesterday's Alfazl and would be praying to Allah. I further desire that in addition to praying individually, you should also pray collectively wherever arrangements for congregational prayers exist. These prayers should follow each Fajr and Maghrib service and should be offered in all humility to our Lord, Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful, with bleeding hearts and tearful eyes. May He accept them. Amen.

7 Ihsan, 1353
7 June, 1974
(Published in daily Alfazl 9. 6. 1974)

Mirza Nasir Ahmad
Khalifatul Masih III

The Status of Women in Islam

B A. Rafiq

At the dawn of the seventh century of the Christian era, in the streets of Mecca, a quiet, thoughtful man was often seen, denouncing in buruing words the then prevailing treatment of women by men. He was the Holy Prophet of Islam who had the unique honour of being the vindicator of women's rights. Before his advent false notions about the status of women were deeply rooted in every mind. Religion had been terribly unfair and almost every nation presented a sad picture of the ill-treatment meted out to them. What Islam did to raise their position would be duly appreciated only if we were to cast a glance at the humiliating position assigned to woman by the various religions and cults in the pre-Islamic world.

Woman in Hinduism

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In Hinduism, the great religion of the East, woman was considered a mere chattel which was the property of the man. There was the frightful institution of *Sati* which required a widow to immolate herself on her deceased husband's funeral pyre. It was considered a pious act of faith on her part proving her love for her deceased husband, and was enthusiastically encouraged and applauded by the relatives of the deceased and the community at large. It was rarely a voluntary act on the part of the widow and force was often resorted to for the achievement of the tragic end. The prospect of widowhood was also alleged to be the motive for such suicide, as widow remarriage was not permissible under Hindu Law. This obnoxious custom continued to persist as late as the middle of the nineteenth century when it was finally suppressed by legislation. Manu, the greatest lawgiver of ancient India, had declared, "Day

and night must women be held by their protectors in a state of dependence". A woman had no right of succession or inheritance in the property left by her father, husband, or other relations.

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Woman in Judaism

Judaism too did not have much regard for woman. It considered woman as an unclean thing for it is written, "Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her : for he said, thy wife shall not dwell in the house of David, King of Israel, because the plac s are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come." (2 Chron ; VIII : II). Again, "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, not one." (Job. XV : 14). The book of Genesis describes woman as the agent of Satan who in the first place deceived Adam and it was through the sin of a woman that Adam was punished by God when he was driven out of the Garden. Thus woman became the "accursed one" and "upon all women rests the curse of Eve. Their doom is to desire." A Hebrew maiden was considered a slave even in the house of her father who had the right of selling her and in case of his death, the sons could dispose of her at their will and pleasure. A daughter had no right of inheritance except in the absence of male heirs.

Woman in Christianity

Christianity gave little hope to woman. The short itinerant ministry of Jesus did almost nothing to improve her condition. Paul in defining the position of woman in Christianity says, "Of the woman came the beginning of sin and through her we all die," and again, "Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived was in transgression." "Let the woman" says he, "learn in silence for all subjection, for I suffer not a woman to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence." Further "Neither was the man created for the woman but the woman for the man." (1 Corin.) and "Thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall

rule over thee," are the typical teachings that reflect the attitude of Christianity towards woman. Jesus' reply to his own mother, "Woman who art thou? What have I to do with thee?" sounds somewhat derogatory. The Fathers of the Church have also condemned woman. Tertullian addressing women, said, "Do you not know that you are each an Eve. The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives, in this age. The guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil's gateway; you are the unsealer of that tree; you are the first deserter of divine law, you destroyed so easily God's image—man."

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The saints of the Church freely indulged in the pious practice of reviling and denouncing woman. St. Barnabas called her "the organ of the devil". St. Jerome called her "the gate of the devil, and the road of iniquity." She is 'the scorpion ever ready to sting' according to St. Bonaventure; 'the instrument which the devil uses to gain possession of our souls' according to St. Cypion; and 'the poison of an asp, the malice of dragon' according to St. Gregory, the Great.

Woman's status in different Societies

Before the advent of Islam woman enjoyed little respect and was considered as an unclean thing. In Japan she was not allowed to pray or to take part in any religious exercises. In China she was not suffered to enter the temples. In India she had nothing to do with the sacred text being regarded as impure as falsehood. If a consecrated image was touched by her it was considered as defiled and was cast aside. In Egypt she was barbarously sacrificed on the banks of the Nile. Under the Roman Law woman was a dependant of her husband. She could not own property and was not a competent witness. She could not be a surety, a tutor or a curator. Neither was she allowed to adopt anyone nor could she be adopted. She could not make a valid will or a contract.

Woman in Arabia

Among the settled pagan Arabs woman formed part of

the estate of her husband or her father. She was looked upon as an inferior creature and a thing without a soul. She was freely sold, exchanged and killed. The nobility considered it a virtue to kill their female infants lest they should bring disgrace on the family. At the death of the father the son could marry his step mothers and society looked upon it as a mere change of authority. The Holy Quran depicts the picture of the woman in the Arab society in the following words:

"They ascribe daughters to Allah - Holy is He! They themselves have what they desire, When to one of them is conveyed the tidings of the birth of a female, his face darkens, while he suppresses his inward grief. He hides himself from the people because of the bad news he has had: Shall he keep it in spite of disgrace or bury it in the dust? Verily, evil is that which they judge." (16 : 58 - 59).

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The wicked custom of burying their female infants alive was first adopted by the chiefs of the tribe of Banu Asa'ad and was later followed by the high dignitaries of Banu Rabiya, Banu Kunda and Banu Tamim. Seeing the deplorably low condition of woman the Holy Founder of Islam started in earnest his mission of emancipating them and raising their status to a level of equality with that of men. The task was difficult indeed and required patience and perseverance on his part. For Arabs it was nothing short of a revolution. A complete change had to be brought about in their attitude towards women. They had to learn that their wives should be objects of love, their daughters of affection, their mothers of respect and veneration. Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. had to infuse a new spirit in their warped minds. He encountered a great deal of opposition. The nobles of Mecca charged him with trying to bring ignominy on them by preaching that women were at a par with men in society. Their belief that woman had no soul was rejected by the Quran in these words:

> "O Ye people ! fear your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and created therefrom its mate, and from them twain spread many men and women ; and fear Allah, in Whose name you appeal to one another, and fear Him particularly respecting ties of kinship. Verily Allah watches over you." (4 : 1-2)

Thus did the Holy Quran establish equality of status between men and women resulting from their common origin from a single soul. Is it not an irony that Islam should be accused with denying soul to woman when it expressly affirms her equality with man ?

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Killing of female infants prohibited

Pre-Islamic Arab society approved of female infanticide because it considered female infants a source of humiliation. The birth of a son was a symbol of glory and chivalry while the birth of a daughter was something that lowered the social prestige of the father. A son was the bread-earning member of the family, a hero in times of tribal brawls and a defender of the family honour. A daughter ultimately belonged to another house, was an easy prey for the enemy and so a constant source of worry to the family. The Holy Quran condemned this erroneous view and declared that the male and the female had an equal status before God and that neither of them could be a source of dishonour and abasement. It happened very often that the female infants were buried alive so as to leave more for the male members of the house in lean years. This too, the Quran prohibited and called this evil an heinous sin :

> "In like manner have their associate gods made the killing of their children appear good to many of the idolaters that they may ruin them and cause them contusion in their religion." (6 : 138)

And again it says :

> "Losers indeed are those who kill their children foolishly

for lack of knowledge, and make unlawful that which Allah has provided for them, forging a lie against Allah. They have indeed gone astray and are not rightly guided." (6 : 141)

The killing of children often happened in three ways : (a) some of the Arabs killed their female children and preserved the male ones, (b) some took the vow that if they had a certain number of children, whether male or female, one of them would be slaughtered in the name of God or in the name of their deities, and (c) sometimes they sacrificed their children to avert a calamity. The Holy Quran prohibited all types of killings

Rights of Daughters

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Islam has offered equal opportunities for the material and spiritual welfare of both male and female issue. On this the Quran says,

"Unto Allah belongs the sovereignty of the Heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills. He bestows female (offspring) upon whom He wills and male (offspring) upon whom He wills" (42 : 50)

The Holy Prophet has said, "One who brings up two daughters and gives them good education, shall be with me in Heaven." And, "If a man has a slave girl, and he gives her good education, shall be with me in Heaven." Ard, "If a man has a slave girl, and he gives her good education and proper training and then sets her free and marries her, such a one will have a double reward." (Bukhari)

Islam has not only laid emphasis on education of women but has also given them a share in the property of their fathers. On the parent's death, a daughter has the right to inherit a share of his property and no one can deprive her of her right. On this the Holy Quran expressly says :

"For men is a share of what the parents and near relations leave ; and for women a share of what the

parents and near relations leave, whether it be little or much—an appointed share." (4 : 8)

Islam stood alone in giving such social equality to woman and in recognising her ownership of her property and her earnings. Neither in Arab Society nor in other communities had she any such right over family property. In England it was as late as 1881 that the 'Married Women's Property Act' was passed which enabled women to own property and to dispose of their earnings. Prior to this woman lived under the most restrictive circumstances. Anything earned by her sweat and labour went into the coffers of parents or husband and she could not claim any portion of it. The Encyclopaedia Britannica under "The right of woman to hold property" gives the following ;

"But the ordinary wife who was simply a woman of the people, had normally no land, no money, safely settled upon her, and therefore no equitable rights protected by the Court of Chancery. Except in the City of London a married woman had not even the right to money she earned by her own labour inside or outside the matrimonial home. A husband could, if he liked, collect the profits arising from his wife's literary work or, from a theatrical manager, her remuneration as an actress ; and in the poor classes the profits made by the mangle, the sewing machine or the charring done in the house of another could be collected by the husband, and without the wife having any recourse to them if the husband drank or gambled them away and left her and her children starving. Even if his conduct had forced her to leave the matrimonial home or he had deserted her, the legal payment made by the employer was the one he made to the husband ; and if he risked paying first to the wife who had earned the money her receipt would not protect him in law if the husband sued."

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Such was the status of woman in the West 1,300 years after Islam had recognised the right of woman to hold and own property.

Woman as Wife

On her marriage a Muslim woman does not lose her identity. She retains her right of inheritance in the property of her parents and keeps the property that she had before the contract of marriage. She can hold her property and add to it without the husband having any share in it. She can have her own separate account and can dispose of any of her property without the consent of her husband. According to the Islamic Law of inheritance she inherits a portion of her father and mother's property as well as a portion from her husband's property.

Marriage according to Islam is a sacred contract between a man and a woman. The free consent of the woman is necessary for marriage. The Prophet is reported to have said, that a woman, whether a maiden or a widow, should not be given away in marriage without obtainlng her free consent. On this the companions asked, "O Prophet, how can we obtain the consent of a maiden if she remains silent through shyness?" The Prophet replied, "If the maiden observes silence, her silence should be construed as consent." If the guardians or parents give her in marriage without her consent, then such a marriage will be considered void and the girl will have the option to have it cancelled. The same applies to the marriage of those who are under-age who, on coming of age, can either acquiesce in it or have it cancelled.

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A maiden approached the Prophet and complained that she had been given in marriage by her guardian against her wishes, and that she was not happy with the marriage. The Prophet gave her the option either to adhere to it or cancel it. (Abu Dawood)

The necessary conditions for a valid marriage are :-

(a) The prior free consent of the bride ;

(b) Husband's agreeing to pay his wife during their lifetime or on the spot a fixed sum as dower in cash or kind ;

(c) Presence of two male witnesses or one male and two

females, who are sane and adults at the time of the marriage;

(d) Consent of the bride's guardian;

(e) Public announcement of the marriage in public.

The dower is something which the bridegroom gives as a present to his bride or settles on her at the time of the marriage or undertakes to give it to her later. It may be in cash or kind. The Quran says,

"And give the women their dowries willingly." (4 : 5)

The dower is a token of sincerity on the part of the husband. Thereby he symbolically declares that from then onward his wife has a share and a right in his belongings. It should be noted that the dower is payable only to the wife and not to any relative of hers. The dower is the exclusive property of the wife, she enjoys full and absolute control over it, and she can spend it as she likes.

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Treatment of Wife

The wife must be treated with kindness and affection. The Quranic directive on this matter is:-

"Consort with them in kindness" (4 : 20)

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: "The best amongst you is he who is best in his treatment of his wife." (Tirmizi) Again the Prophet has advised: "A Muslim must not be harsh in treatment of his wife; if he be displeased with one disagreeable quality in her let him find pleasure in another which is agreeable." Again, he remarked: "The more civil and kinder is a Muslim to his wife, the more perfect of faith he is," and "You have rights over your wives as they have rights over you".

The Quran puts woman on her proper pedestal by saying: "Your wives are garments for you as you are garments for them." The Prophet pointed out: "Do you know that woman deserves greater reward than man, for verily God the Almighty exalts the position

of a man in Heaven because his wife was pleased with him and prayed for him," and "A person wno ill-treats his wife during the day and loves her at night acts in complete contradiction of the beauty of human nature," and further "Woman is fragile like crystal and man should, therefore, treat woman with delicacy and tenderness, as he would handle an article made of crystal."

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Divorce

As the contract of marriage is entered upon by a man and a woman of their free will, they are free to end this contract in case of compulsive need. Islam lays down the course to be adopted in such cases. It does not encourage or condone divorce. On the other hand it requires that the husband should be kind in his treatment of his wife and the wife must be faithful, obedient and co-operative. Unless both seek to adjust themselves to each other's temperament there cannot be a happy family relationship between them. The Holy Prophet has said: "Divorce is the most abnoxious of all lawful things in the sight of God." Again the Prophet is reported to have said: "Marry women and do not divorce them capriciously because God does not like lustful men or women."

Al Ghazali, an eminent Muslim scholar has said:

> "The greatest care should be taken to avoid divorce, for though divorce is permitted, yet God disapproves of it, becanse the very utterance of the word 'divorce' causes a woman mental torture and how can it be right to cause pain to anyone?"

Thus Islam does not permit a husband to divorce his wife without cause. On the other hand it has laid certain restrictions on the exercise of the power of divorce. Regarding this the guidance given through the Holy Quran by God is:

> "If you fear a breach between them, then appoint an arbiter from his folk and an arbiter from her folk. If they (the arbiters) desire reconciliation, Allah will effect it between them. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-

Aware." (4 : 36)

And again it says :

> "Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three courses ; and it is not lawful for them that they conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the Last day ; and their husbands have the greater right to take them back during that period, provided they desire reconciliation. They (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in equity, but men have a rank above them. Allah is Mighty, Wise." (2 : 229)

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From the above it emerges that :

(a) Divorce can only be announced when the woman is in a state of purity ;

(b) After the pronouncement of divorce there must be an interval of three menstruation periods i.e., about three months, which period is called *Iddat* or the period of waiting.

This period of three months is prescribed so as to afford opportunity to both parties to think over their decision and reconsider its implications lest they should repent afterwards. If there is any way open for reconciliation, they should have recourse to it within this period.

(c) The wife must not conceal from the husband her pregnancy. This, no doubt, would provide better chances of reconciliation because of the prospective birth of a child ;

(d) During this perlod of three months resumption of conjugal relationship would concel the pronouncement of divorce ;

(e) The payment of dower is an essential condition of the divorce.

KHULA (The right of wife to obtain divorce from her husband)

Islam gives the wife also the right to claim divorce. If she establishes that the failure of the marriage is due to the husband's default she can claim, or retain her dower. But if she demands divorce without any default on the part of the husband, she may have to forego the whole or part of the dower. This demand is technically called *Khula*. Such a claim is to be made before a judge who will, after hearing the parties, declare the matrimonial relationship as having come to an end. It is not necessary that the woman should make definite allegations against the husband to justify her demand for a divorce. She can obtain a divorce if she does not like the husband any more. It is related that Jamila, the wife of Quais, demanded separation from her husband on the ground that she did not like him. She said she did not find any fault with him on account of his morals or religion. She just did not like him. This case was heard by the Holy Prophet himself who granted *Khula* on condition that she should return the orchard she had received from her husband as dower.

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Thus Islam established the right of a wife also to obtain divorce. It warns, however, that this right also should be used only in extreme cases. The Prophet is reported to have said :

> "A woman who seeks separation from her husband without legitimate cause shall be deprived of the fragrance of Heaven."

The husband and the wife are both warned to fear Allah and refrain from transgression in matters of divorce. Thus divorce is permitted in Islam but must not be resorted to lightly.

Polygamy in Islam

The next important matter concerning woman is the injunction of the Holy Quran regarding polygamy. It must be clearly understood that polygamy is permitted in Islam as an exception and not as a rule. There are cases an where individual

has to have recourse to plural marriage so as to safeguard the moral standards of society or of the individual. There are four objects of marriage according to the Holy Quran. If these objects cannot be achieved through a monogamous marriage then Islam permits recourse to polygamy. These objects are: (a) Procreation of children; (b) protection against physical, moral and spiritual maladies; (c) peace of mind and availability of a loving companion; and (d) widening of the circle of relationship.

If the wife, for instance, should become a permanant invalid or insane, there would be only one way to carry on the household, and that would be a second marriage. That the sick or invalid wife should be divorced and then a second marriage contracted would be needless cruelty to the first wife who in such a case would need the help and sympathy of the husband. Again if the wife proves to be barren what shall the man do if he wanted children? He will either have to divorce the first wife and marry one who would be able to bear children thus inflicting prolonged suffering on the first wife, or follow the course indicated by Islam.

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Thus it would be seen that in diverse circumstances it becomes necessary to marry another wife. The Promised Messiah has said: "Some people raise objections against Islam on the score that Islam permits plurality of wives. To them our challenge is: can they venture to show that the Holy Quran has made it obligatory upon a person to have more wives than one in all circumstances? Of course, it is true and natural that sometimes a man feels the need of marrying more wives than one, as for example, if a woman becomes blind or falls a prey to some other serious disease and in consequence, she is unable to attend to the household affairs and her husband also does not like, out of sympathy for her, to part with her; or should the wife fall a victim to some serious sexual disorder and is unable to satisfy the physical needs of the husband. In these circumstances if the husband is not permitted to marry a se-

cond wife, will it not encourage illicit sexual relationships and immorality? If a religion prohibits polygamy altogether, it will certainly promote illegitimate sexual relations and immorality. Islam desires to remove illegitimacy and immorality from the world, and so it permits a man, in such cases, to marry more wives than one.

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Similarly when a person has no issue and on his death, feuds and factions are likely to break out in the family, it becomes incumbent upon him to marry more wives than one and procreate children. In such cases, good and noble wives themselves urge the husband to marry another woman. The more one reflects upon this matter, the clearer it becomes. Christians have no right to find fault with polygamy for their revered prophets and apostles, even the ancestors of Jesus Christ, had sometimes hundreds of wives. If the Christians maintain that those prophets and apostles, were sinners, they will have no reply to the question, how can their revelations be regarded as divine?

The institution of polygamy is also intended to meet the serious situation that follows a war in which a large number of men are killed in the battle-fields and the belligerent countries are left with more women than men. The two great world wars left Europe with a larger number of women than men. There are only two ways to follow in such a contingency. Either to safeguard chastity and morality by following the Islamic injunctions about polygamy and saving society from a moral and spiritual decline; or to let society slide into immorality. There is no third cource. It is high time that Europe appreciated the need for and the beneficence of this Islamic institution and rid itself of the present trend towards immorality.

Position of the Mother

The third position that a woman can have in society is that of a mother. Here again Islam has exalted her position. The Holy Prophet laid so much stress on obedience to and care

of the mother that it is related that before one of the battles when the Prophet reviewed the Muslim ranks he asked one of the soldiers to go back to town and take care of his mother. The soldier was much disappointed at these instructions and begged the Prophet to let him take part in the fighting. The Prophet told him that as his mother was ill and needed his care and help his service was more needed at home.

On one occassion the Prophet related the following story to his followers. "Three persons were on a journey. They stopped for the night in a cave. During the night a great storm broke out and the exit from the cave was blocked by a big stone which had rolled to its mouth. Those inside were terrified. One of them suggested a possible way out of this calamity, that each one of them should relate one of his actions that he had done solely for the pleasure of God and then beg God to remove the stone from the mouth of the cave. One of them related that one night he returned from his field and found his mother asleep without having eaten anything. He stood beside her throughout the night with a cup of milk in his hands. When his mother awoke in the morning she took the milk. During the night his children were crying for milk but he would not leave his mother's bedside. God signified His pleasure with the kindness that he had shown to his mother that caused the stone to move from the mouth of the cave."

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The Holy Prophet has stated: "Paradise lies under the feet of your mothers."

The Holy Quran admonishes: "Be grateful to Me and thy parents. His mother bore him through weakness and his weaning takes two years. Unto Me is the final return". (31 : 15).

Such is the dignified position of woman in Islam. History is replete with stories of the terrible treatment meted out to women by men. No religion has come to their rescue. It is to the credit of Islam alone that it laid down express teachings for the guidance of mankind in their relationship to women. If

in certain societies the status of women has been raised that is not due to the efforts of religious leaders but is the outcome of public feeling. Islam did not wait for women to press their claims for freedom and for the recognition of their rights but made provision in advance for a balanced and adjusted social order. All praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

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